

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE LOCAL MOVEMENTS OF GURNEY'S
SUGARBIRD IN THE LYDENBURG AREA

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The recent paper on Cape Sugarbird *Promerops cafer* movements (Oschadleus and Fraser, 1988) prompted me to report on similar observations on Gurney's Sugarbird *P. gurneyi* in the Transvaal.

Observations in the Lydenburg area started in 1980 when I first noticed a winter influx of Gurney's Sugarbirds to suburban habitats (de Swardt in prep.). In 1986 I started colour-ringing the sugarbirds to study their local movements between the mountain and the town (de Swardt 1987). By December 1988, 51 sugarbirds had been ringed on the mountain (September - April) and 25 in the town area (May - August). Each adult bird was fitted with an unique colour-ring combination in addition to a numbered metal ring. Juveniles were not colour-ringed as they could not be sexed.

Table 1 (overleaf) gives details of sugarbirds retrapped or resighted in the mountain and town study areas. The first sighting of a colour-ringed Gurney's Sugarbird in the town was on 14 June 1987. This individual had been ringed at Paardeplaats along the Long Tom Pass to Sabie on 28 February 1987. An adult male ringed on 9 January 1988 at Sterkspruit, also along the Long Tom Pass but nearer to the town, was retrapped in a town garden on 23 July 1988. These two were the first confirmed records of individual Gurney's Sugarbird undergoing local seasonal movements between the mountain and the town. The movements coincided with the end of the flowering period of proteas in the mountainous habitat. When the flowering period of *Protea roupelliae* reaches the end of its peak during February/March the sugarbirds start utilizing other food sources and thus reach the town area. It also appears that at least some individuals return to the same winter sites because a sugarbird ringed in a garden on 28 June 1987 was resighted at the same place during the following autumn on 27 March 1988. On 27 December 1988 I found a nest with a female incubating eggs at Paardeplaats. This bird had been ringed on 5 September 1987 at the same locality and her mate, who was retrapped on 8 October 1988 and again resighted with the female, was ringed at Paardeplaats on 28 November 1987.

To date, 30 % of the Gurney's Sugarbirds ringed in one of the habitats were observed or recaptured in the other. Although there is a definite influx of birds to the suburban habitat during winter, not all sugarbirds move down to town during winter as many are seen in the cliffs at this time where they feed on aloe nectar or at some proteas where a few flowers are still available.

REFERENCES:

De Swardt, D. 1987. The Gurney's Sugarbird. Witwatersrand Bird Club News 139: 17-19.

De Swardt, D. In prep. Birds of Gustav Klingbiel Nature Reserve and the Sterkspruit area, Lydenburg, Southern Birds.

Oschadleus, D and Fraser, M. 1988. Observations of colour-ringed Cape Sugarbirds at Kirstenbosch. Safring News 17: 59-64.

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TABLE 1

DETAILS OF RECAPTURES AND SIGHTING OF GURNEY'S SUGARBIRD
PROMEROPS GURNEYI IN THE LYDENBURG AREA

RING NO.	SEX	RINGING DATE	LOCALITY	DATE OBSERVED	*** S/R	LOCALITY	DISTANCE MOVED KM	TIME ELAPSED (MONTHS)
4-38902	FEMALE	28.02.87	PAARDEPLAATS	31.05.88	S	TOWN	9	3
4-38904	FEMALE	28.02.87	PAARDEPLAATS	23.08.87	S	PAARDEPLAATS	0	6
4-38906	FEMALE	28.02.87	PAARDEPLAATS	14.06.87	S	TOWN	9	4
4-38907	MALE	01.03.87	STERKSPRUIT	29.11.87	S	STERKSPRUIT	0	9
4-38907	MALE	01.03.87	STERKSPRUIT	10.01.88	R	STERKSPRUIT	0	10
4-38912	MALE	01.03.87	STERKSPRUIT	06.09.87	R	STERKSPRUIT	0	6
4-38913	FEMALE	01.03.87	STERKSPRUIT	25.03.89	S	STERKSPRUIT	0	25
4-38921*	MALE	28.06.87	TOWN	27.03.88	S	TOWN	?	9
4-38929**	FEMALE	05.09.87	PAARDEPLAATS	30.12.88	R	PAARDEPLAATS	0	16
4-38929	FEMALE	05.09.87	PAARDEPLAATS	22.03.89	R	PAARDEPLAATS	0	20
4-38938	FEMALE	06.09.87	STERKSPRUIT	09.01.88	R	STERKSPRUIT	2	5
4-38941**	MALE	28.11.87	PAARDEPLAATS	08.10.88	R	PAARDEPLAATS	0	10
4-38941**	MALE	28.11.87	PAARDEPLAATS	30.12.88	S	PAARDEPLAATS	0	13
4-38944	MALE	28.11.87	PAARDEPLAATS	22.03.89	R	PAARDEPLAATS	0	16
4-38954	MALE	09.01.88	STERKSPRUIT	23.07.88	R	TOWN	6	7

* This sugarbird returned to its wintering site of the previous year.

** The female was retrapped at her nest while incubating eggs. The female and the male were a breeding pair.

*** S = Sighted, R = Recaptured